

DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES

Preferred Alternative

The proposed project would widen, reconstruct, and relocate SR 347/Friendship Road and Thompson Mill Road. The project would begin just east of I-985 and end at SR 211. The total project length would be approximately 7.9 miles.

The existing roadway is classified as a rural major collector that serves as an east-west connector between I-985 and I-85. Currently, SR 347 is a two-lane rural roadway with a posted speed limit of 45/50 mph. The proposed design speed is 45 mph. The existing right-of-way is approximately 80 feet.

The preferred alternative would widen SR 347 to six lanes with an urban typical section from I-985 to Friendship Circle (CR 657), transitioning from six lanes to four lanes between Friendship Circle and Maple Valley Drive, and continuing as a four-lane rural roadway to SR 211. Both sections would be separated by a 20-foot raised median. The urban section would have 16-foot shoulders, and the rural section would have 10-foot shoulders, including 6.5-foot paved. The six-lane urban section from I-985 to Friendship Circle would include curb and gutter and a five-foot sidewalk on both sides of the roadway. Sidewalks are not proposed along the four-lane rural section.

This alternative would widen Friendship Road along the existing alignment from I-985 to just west of Dunbar Road (CR 660). Just east of CR 660, the alignment would shift to the north on new location, crossing Spout Spring Road approximately 1,500 feet north of the fixed leg intersection at Thompson Mill Road. The alignment would continue on new location shifting south back to the existing Thompson Mill Road alignment at Corners Drive for approximately 1,600 feet. The alignment would continue north on new location to SR 211, approximately 1,600 feet north of the existing intersection of SR 211 and Thompson Mill Road. Access would be partially limited on new location and controlled by permit on existing location. The new right-of-way would vary from approximately 150 feet to 300 feet wide.

The preferred alternative includes improvements to the intersection of CR 560/Bennett Road and CR 685/Hog Mountain Road. The preferred alternative alignment would avoid impacts to the residential property in the northwest quadrant of this intersection. This property includes the Roberts-Orr House, a significant historic resource. The preferred alternative alignment would create a skewed intersection that meets the current Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) design and safety standards but is not the desirable condition because of the skew.

GDOT became aware that the Roberts-Orr House property was recently sold, and the current property owner intends to develop the property. The Hall County Historical Society is working with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources Historic Preservation Division (HPD) to move the structure to an alternative site, which would save the house from destruction.

As a result, GDOT is evaluating the potential to change the currently proposed skewed alignment of this intersection to a more desirable condition. Specifically, without the requirement to avoid the Roberts-Orr House property, a preferable alignment would be to construct the intersection at a 90 degree angle. This alignment would be more desirable than a skewed intersection, because it would have better horizontal site distance and improved safety. The feasibility of this design change is dependent on additional consultation with the FHWA and State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) that would determine the property to no longer be a significant historic resource once the structure is removed from the property. This alternative will continue to be evaluated as the project moves forward.

Widen Existing Alignment Alternative

The alternative to widen the existing alignment would widen and reconstruct SR 347/Friendship Road and Thompson Mill Road. The project would begin just east of I-985 and end at SR 211. This alignment would follow the preferred alternative alignment from just east of I-985 to just west of Spout Spring Road. This alternative would continue to widen Friendship Road to the intersection at Spout Spring Road, rather than shifting to new alignment north of the existing Friendship Road. The alignment would then correct the skewed angles at the Friendship Road/Thompson Mill Road/Spout Spring Road intersection. This alternative would widen Thompson Mill Road from the intersection with Spout Spring Road east to the existing Thompson Mill Road intersection with SR 211.

The alternative to widen the existing alignment would address the need to improve the operational conditions and safety concerns along Friendship Road and Thompson Mill Road. However, correction of the skewed angles at the Friendship Road/Thompson Mill Road/Spout Spring Road intersection would result in multiple residential displacements in the vicinity of the intersection. Additionally, realignment of the sub-standard vertical and horizontal curvature on the existing Thompson Mill Road alignment would result in the displacement of more residences than would be displaced by the preferred alternative.

The alternative to widen the existing alignment would decrease impacts to three streams from the impacts anticipated as a result of the preferred alignment. However, widening the existing alignment would increase linear impacts to one stream and would result in longitudinal impacts to two streams.

No-Build Alternative

The no-build alternative is one in which the GDOT would take no action to construct the proposed project. Under this alternative, the proposed widening, reconstruction, and relocation of SR 347/Friendship Road and Thompson Mill Road would not be implemented. The no-build alternative does not address the need to improve the operational conditions and safety concerns along SR 347/Friendship Road and Thompson Mill Road. The anticipated benefits of the proposed project would not be realized with the no-build alternative. Travel from I-985 to SR 211 would continue to be impeded. Conversely, the no-build alternative would not result in any of the anticipated impacts associated with the preferred alternative, primarily residential displacements and disruption to the surrounding community.